



State Senator **NANCY CASSIS** *E-NEWS UPDATE*

Cassis secures FIRST Robotics funding in the 2006-2007 budget

With the recent legislative approval of the fiscal year 2006-07 budget, I am particularly pleased that, for the first time, \$150,000 was secured in the school aid budget for the FIRST Robotics program. I worked hard to obtain funding for this program, and I am so delighted that my colleagues understand its importance. For Inspiration and Recognition in Science and Technology (FIRST) is an interactive public/private partnership with sponsors like General Motors. Education is the future of our state, and this program provides essential opportunities for our young people in advanced skilled technology fields in such high demand today.

FIRST Robotics is a multinational competition in which teams of high school students, sponsored and assisted by local companies and volunteers, design, assemble and test a robot capable of performing a specified task. I have been a strong supporter of this program over the last 10 years and have spoken to students, parents, corporate sponsors, mentors and coaches on its importance and on the skills it develops.

Two 2005 World Championship teams are from Oakland County, Novi High School and Huron Valley Schools. Novi also won the Imagery Award at the 2005 Great Lakes Regional Competition and at the Detroit Regional Competition they won the prestigious Chairman's Award. Huron Valley Schools captured the 2005 prestigious FIRST Chairman's Award, earning them a permanent place in the FIRST Robotics Hall of Fame. I am very proud to represent these spectacular teams.

Today's competitors are the engineers and highly trained technicians needed today and tomorrow. FIRST Robotics teaches young people focused brainstorming, real-world teamwork, writing competency and the ability to develop timelines and work on deadline—all skills that will be helpful in preparation for higher education and entry into the work force.

Under new law school administrators could receive certifications

A bill approved and signed into law would require the State Board of Education to develop a voluntary school administrator's certification standards.

Senate Bill 673 would allow certification for superintendents, school principals, assistant principals and other administrators whose primary responsibility is administering instructional programs.

Michigan is the only state that does not require certification for school administrators. The law is a voluntary program, but it would be to an administrator's benefit to be certified. Allowing for voluntary administrator certification would provide more consistent leadership in schools and improve public confidence in school leaders.

Legislation to support renewable fuels now law

A bipartisan, bicameral package of bills to promote and make renewable fuels more widely available in Michigan has been approved by the governor and assigned Public Acts 268-274.

As the price of gasoline continues to increase, it is imperative that Michigan do everything possible to research, develop and make available alternative fuels.

The legislation will help spur growth in Michigan's agriculture industry and promote and encourage use of E85, a fuel blend that is 85 percent ethanol, and B5, a fuel containing at least 5 percent biodiesel. Biodiesel is made from soybeans, and ethanol is made from corn; both are major agricultural commodities in Michigan. Ethanol costs an average of 70 to 80 cents less than regular gasoline, which will help reduce gas prices for Michigan motorists. In addition, increased investment in alternative fuels will help create jobs as new facilities are built across the state.

The renewable fuel package provides tax incentives and grants to foster non-fossil fuel development, production, and use.

Although GM and Ford are heavily investing in the production of E85 vehicles, there are only four pumps dispensing the fuel in Michigan, while Minnesota has 198 pumps and Illinois has 104 pumps statewide. The transition to making ethanol and biodiesel more available in Michigan will take time, but the legislature and the governor have made an all-important first step possible.

Contact Information:

The E-News Update by Senator Nancy Cassis is designed to provide residents and organizations with a periodic update of my activity in Lansing. If you have any questions or do not wish to receive this e-mail, please contact my office.

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